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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/705,406

11/10/2003

Satoshi Mizutani

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10/31/2007

DARBY & DARBY P.C.

P.O. BOX 770

Church Street Station

New York, NY 10008-0770

EXAMINER

STEPHENS, JACQUELINE F

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3761

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

10/31/2007

PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/705,406

Applicant(s)

MIZUTANI ET AL.

Examiner

Jacqueline F. Stephens

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3761

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 8/23/07.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 17 and 19-27 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 17 and 19-27 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments filed 8/23/07 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive. Applicant argues Weirlacher fails to teach or otherwise suggest that the fingertip openings are formed by unbonded portions on left and right side edges of the rear surface side sheet in a central area of the direction along the longitudinal axis where the pair of fingertip insert openings are configured to form a convex protruding area when the sheet portion is pinched via the pair of fingertip openings. However, Wierlacher teaches an embodiment where the handling aid is a series of loops. A series of loops constitutes loops in succession, which meets the claim limitation of unbonded portions. Because the handling aid stretches across the central region towards the longitudinal edges of the article, it is reasonable to assume the series of loops would also be oriented across the central region towards the longitudinal side edges.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

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3. Claims 17, 19, 24, and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by WO 99/01093 to Wierlacher. Weirlacher discloses a pad having a substantially planar shape, a longitudinal axis, and a lateral axis, and being capable of being used as an interlabial pad comprising an absorbent body 24 for absorbing body fluids; a water-permeable surface side sheet 22, and a rear surface side sheet 23; a sheet body 58 lapped on the rear surface side sheet (Figure 8); bonded sheet portions of the rear surface side sheet provided at the neighborhood of both longitudinal surrounding ends of the interlabial pad (Figure 8). Wierlacher teaches the sheet body can comprises more than one strip of material or a series of loops (page 23, paragraph 2), which would constitute a pair of fingertip insert opening. Wierlacher teaches an embodiment where the handling aid is a series of loops. A series of loops constitutes loops in succession, which meets the claim limitation of unbonded portions. Because the handling aid stretches across the central region towards the longitudinal edges of the article, it is reasonable to assume the series of loops would also be oriented across the central region towards the longitudinal side edges. Wierlacher further discloses a folding guide element 70, 72 along the longitudinal axis provided to form a convex protruding area when the sheet portion is pinched. As to the limitations of being pinched via the fingertip openings, these limitations are directed to an intended use of the article. "Intended use must result in a structural difference between the claimed invention and the prior art in order to patentably distinguish the claimed invention from the prior art. See *In re Casey*, 152 USPQ 235 (CCPA 1967) and *In re Otto*, 136 USPQ 458, 459

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(CCPA 1963).” If the prior art structure is capable of performing the intended use, then it meets the claim limitations.

As to claims 19, Wierlacher discloses folding guide elements 64, 68, 70, and 72.

As to claimed 24 and 25, Wierlacher discloses a long protruding area 50 along a symmetric axis. Wierlacher discloses the protruding area is formed when by the users finger assisted by the bend lines (page 25, paragraph 2; Figures 1, 3, 5B, 5C).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

5. Claim 20-23 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wierlacher WO 9901093.

As to claims 20-22, Wierlacher does not specifically disclose the size of the insert opening. However, Weirlacher discloses the size of the opening for inserting at least one finger for positioning purposes (page 22, paragraph 2; pages 25, paragraphs 1 and 2; page 26, paragraph 5). In *Gardner v. TEC Systems, Inc.*, 725 F.2d 1338, 220 USPQ 777 (Fed. Cir. 1984), *cert. denied*, 469 U.S. 830, 225 USPQ 232 (1984), the Federal Circuit held that, where the only difference between the prior art and the claims was a recitation of relative dimensions of the claimed device and a device having the claimed relative dimensions would not perform differently than the prior art device, the claimed device was not patentably distinct from the prior art device.

As to claim 23, Weirlacher does not disclose a pattern or chromatic difference between the sheet body and the opposite side of the pad to the body side. It would have been an obvious matter of design choice to provide a color or pattern to the pad, since applicant has not disclosed that it solves any stated problem or is for any particular purpose and it appears that the invention would perform equally well with a uniform pad as taught in Weirlacher.

6. Claims 26-27 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wierlacher WO 9901093 in view of Farris et al. USPN 6131736. Wierlacher does not disclose a wrapping sheet for covering and enclosing the interlabial product. Farris et

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al. discloses a packaging device including a wrapping sheet 40 for the benefit of storing the interlabial device until ready for use in such a manner that the user neither touches nor contaminates the surface of the absorbent in handling (Farris col. 5, lines 45-52). It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify the invention of Weirlacher to include a packaging device for the benefits taught in Farris.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Jacqueline F. Stephens whose telephone number is (571) 272-4937. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 9:00-5:30.


If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tanya Zalukaeva can be reached on (571) 272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

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Jacqueline R. Stephens
Primary Examiner
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October 28, 2007